

Minimize Homesickness



If this is your child's first trip to Camp Ondessonk for camp, your preparation in advance will go a long way toward helping them have a great experience and minimize the effects of homesickness. Almost all first-time campers and many returning campers experience some level of homesickness. These feelings are natural, extremely common, and very real. Most cases of homesickness are mild. Some cases are challenging. Our staff members are trained to help campers work through these feelings and as a result, homesickness usually subsides within 24 hours of arriving at Camp. When preparing your child for Camp, you will minimize the likelihood of a serious case of homesickness by using the following parenting strategies:

- **Do not tell your child that you will pick them up if he/she does not like Camp right away.** Regrettably, we encounter this often. Though parents who give this message have good intentions, their children have an extremely hard time getting better when homesick. Be very honest with your child about what it means to sign up for something and follow through with it. Leaving Camp early is an absolute last resort.
- Develop a Camp nighttime routine at home. Practice falling asleep without noise, such as television or music. A fan or other ambient noise might help acclimate campers to typical nighttime sounds. Units at Camp have no electricity, so make sure that the camper is comfortable falling asleep in full darkness. Have them sleep with a flashlight next to the bed to practice using it at night. Finally, have your child spend a night or two away from home with a friend.
- Involve your child in planning for Camp. While doing this, focus on the fun that will be had.
- If you sense that your child is nervous about going to Camp and missing home, talk about it. Use an encouraging approach and supply your child with ideas that will help him/her work through it. Suggest writing a letter or taking along a favorite keepsake from home. You know your child better than anyone. What has helped her/him handle stressful situations in the past? All conversation about this subject will help if encouragement is at the forefront.
- If possible, send your child with a friend. Be sure that they are truly friends, not just acquaintances from school. If your child is going to Camp alone, emphasize the opportunities that he/ she will have to meet new people. Many of our staff, including Ondessonk's Executive Director, came to Camp Ondessonk alone as campers. Being alone should be seen as an opportunity.
- Discuss what Camp will be like. Read the Parent & Camper Handbook ([located on the Parent Resources webpage](#)) with your child and let him/her know what to expect. Focus on the positive aspects of Camp. Talk about the fun activities, the idea of "growing up" and the independence and adventure of it all. Visit our website with your child. Look at the photos and read about Ondessonk together.
- Establish realistic expectations. Camp, like life, has high points and low ones. Not every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement. Encouraging your child to try new things and make new friends will help the experience be a positive one.
- Write to your child. Kids love to receive letters at Camp and getting one from home on the first or second day does wonders. Send a letter early (or drop it off at the Office) to ensure it arrives on time. Be aware that homesickness may be brought on by a letter that tells a child how much she/he is missed, or how much fun everyone else at home is having. Letters of an encouraging tone help promote a positive Camp experience.
- Plan to attend one of our "Learning More About Camp" Webinars. This is an excellent way for both new and returning camper families to hear about Camp Ondessonk's summer camp planning and see a virtual unit tour. You will meet some of our leadership staff and can ask questions about the Camp O experience. Go to the Events section of our website to register.

In the event your child does have a bout with homesickness, please be assured that he/she will receive individual counseling directly from staff members trained for that purpose. If your child is having a particularly hard time, a Camp representative will contact you directly for support. Otherwise, no news is good news.